

REMARKS

Claims 5-24 are in the application.

Claims 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, and 21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Nakatani et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,118,924). Claims 6-8, 13-15, 18, 19, 20, and 22-24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakatani et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,118,924).

Nakatani has a filing date of September 17, 1998. The present application, on the other hand, has claimed priority under 35 U.S.C. 119 based upon Japanese Application No. 10-046855 filed on February 27, 1998 and Japanese Application No. 9-288178 filed on October 21, 1997. On the first page of the present office action, the Examiner acknowledged receipt of each certified copy of such foreign applications in the parent Application Serial No. 09/174,797 having a filing date of October 19, 1998 which has matured into patent U.S. 6,665,690. Certified translations in English of these priority applications (i.e., 10-046855 and 9-288178) accompany this Amendment. Accordingly, the present application has an effective filing date, which antedates the date of Nakatani. As a result, it is respectfully submitted that Nakatani is not an effective prior art reference against the present application.

Furthermore, although the applicants have asserted that Nakatani is not an effective reference against the present application, such assertion is not a representation concerning distinctions and/or similarities between the present invention and Nakatani. Applicants reserve their right to traverse any further rejection that may be presented on a similar document and having an earlier effective date.

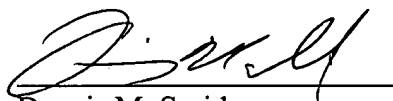
Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejections to claims 5-24 are respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing remarks, it is believed that all of the claims in this application are believed to be allowable, and an official notice to that effect is solicited.

Please charge any fees incurred by reason of this response and not paid herewith to Deposit Account No. 50-0320.

Respectfully submitted,
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